JEPH LOEB
JIM LEE
S. WILLIAMS
IT BEGINS HERE!
608 DEC 2002
BATMAN
JIM LEE 2001
DIRECT SALES
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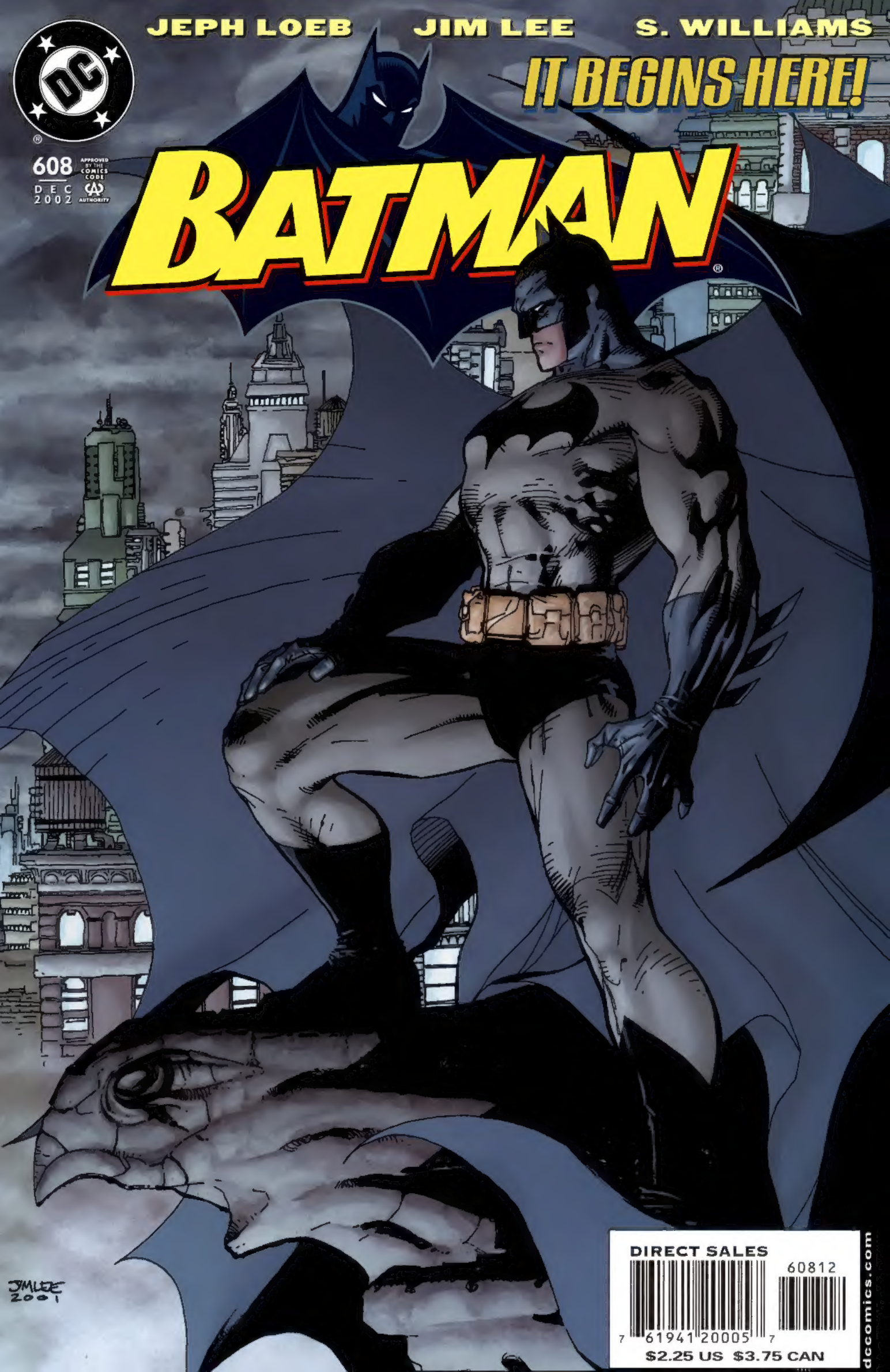
$2.25 US $3.75 CAN
dccomics.com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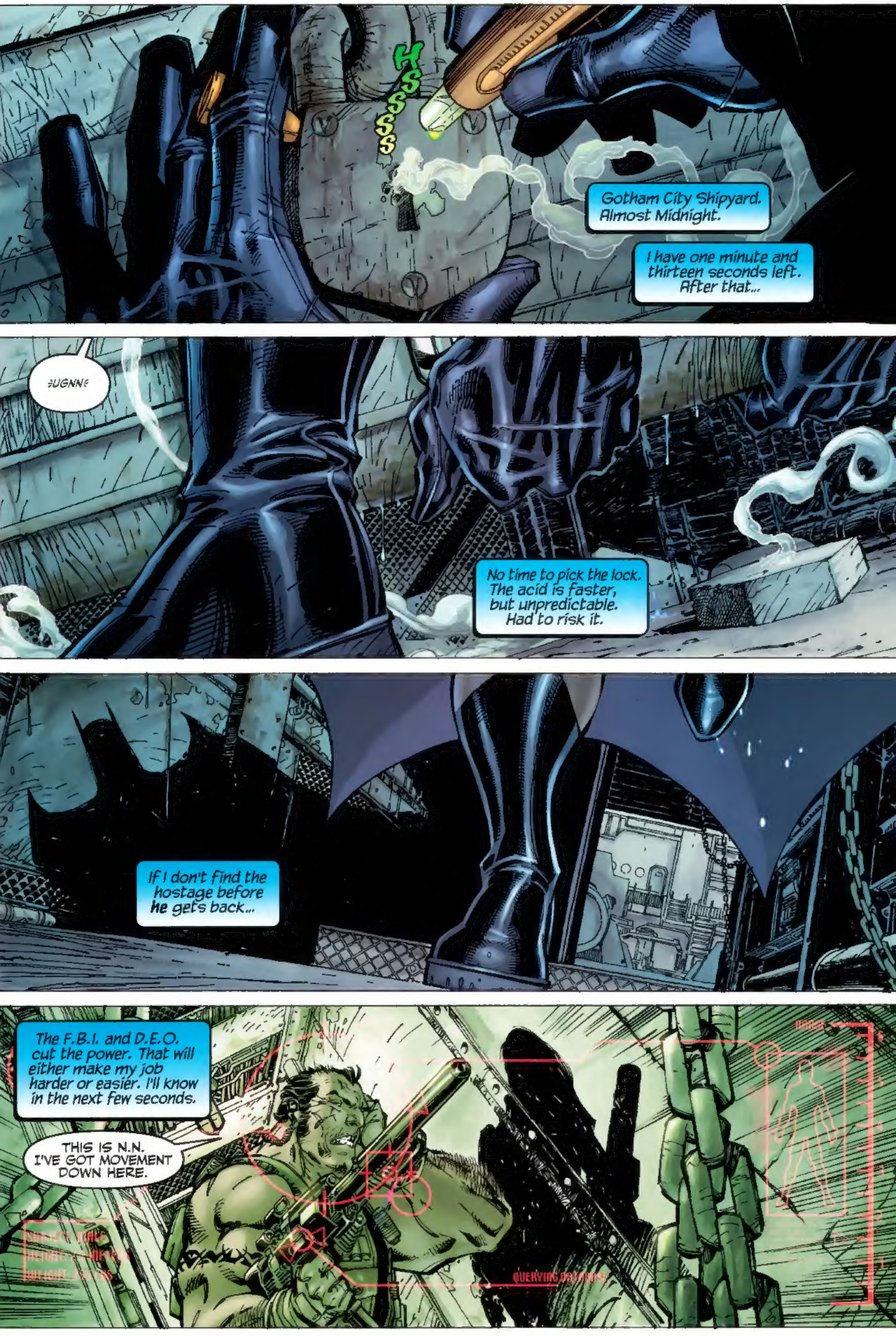
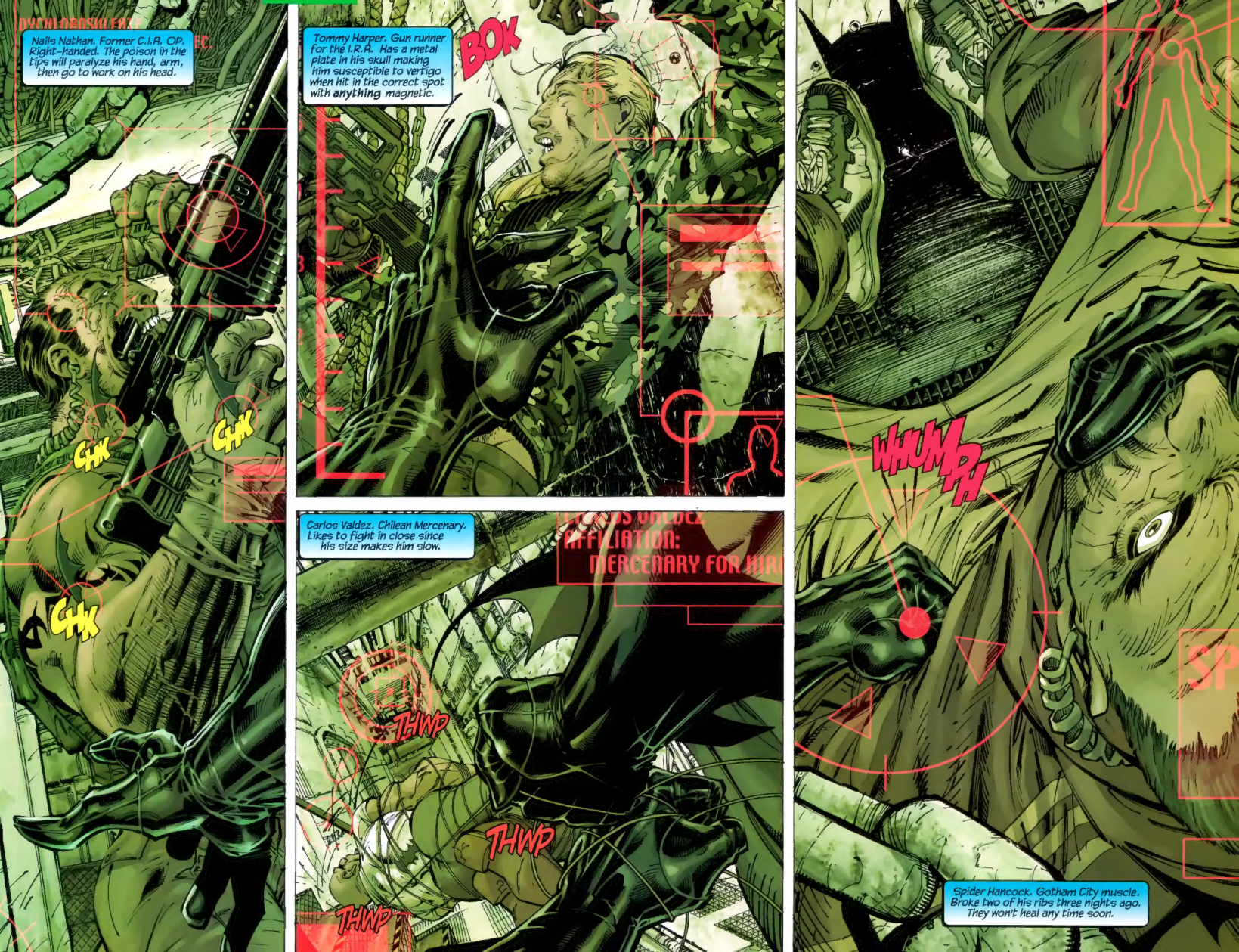
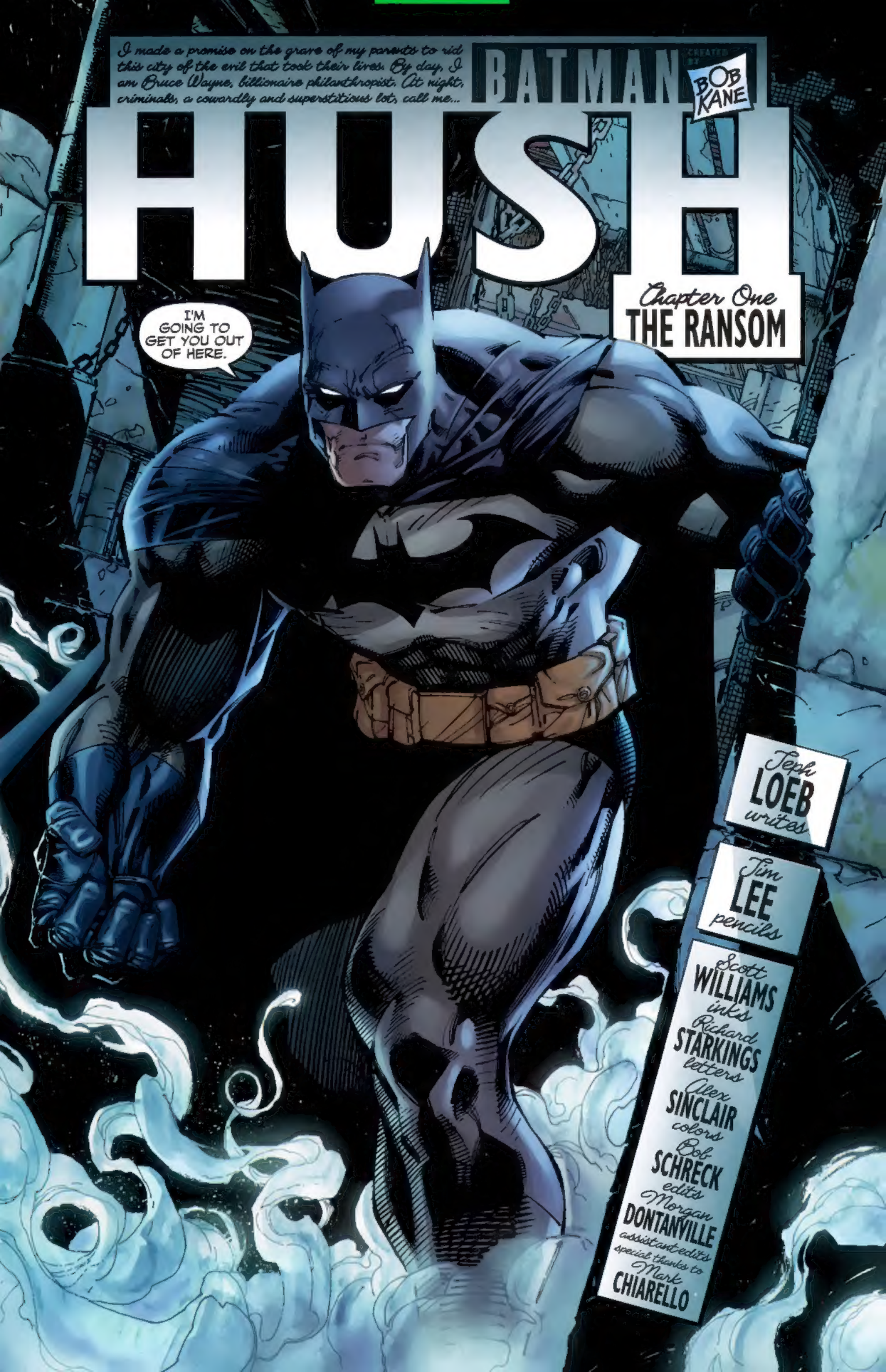
NEW YORK POST EXCLUSIVE


HSSSSS
Gotham City Shipyard. Almost Midnight.
I have one minute and thirteen seconds left. After that...
GUGNN!
No time to pick the lock. The acid is faster, but unpredictable. Had to risk it.
If I don't find the hostage before he gets back...
The F.B.I. and D.E.O. cut the power. That will either make my job harder or easier. I'll know in the next few seconds.
THIS IS N.N. I'VE GOT MOVEMENT DOWN HERE.


Nails Nathan. Former C.I.A. OP. Right-handed. The poison in the tips will paralyze his hand, arm, then go to work on his head.
CHK
CHK
CHK
Tommy Harper. Gun runner for the I.R.A. Has a metal plate in his skull making him susceptible to vertigo when hit in the correct spot with anything magnetic.
BOK
Carlos Valdez. Chilean Mercenary. Likes to fight in close since his size makes him slow.
AFFILIATION:
MERCENARY FOR HIRE
THWP
THWP
THWP
WHUMPH
Spider Hancock. Gotham City muscle. Broke two of his ribs three nights ago. They won't heal any time soon.

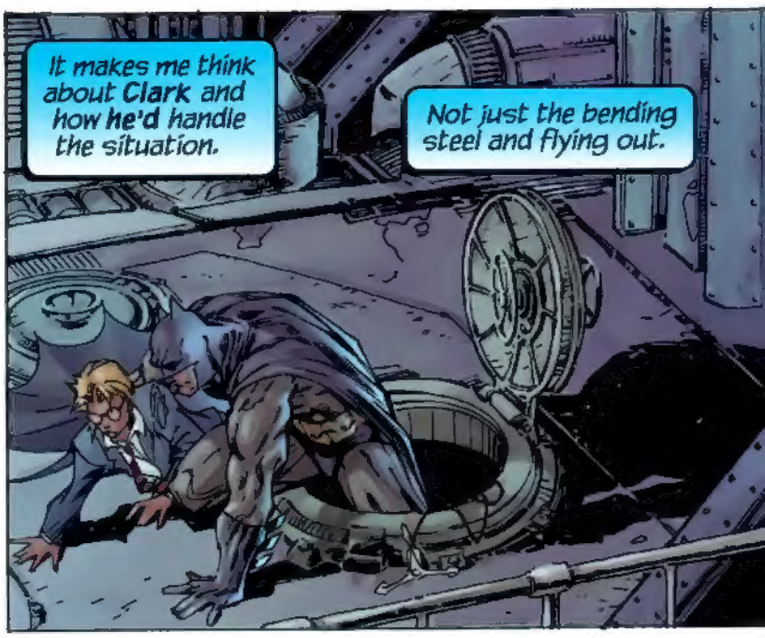
Someone spent a lot of money assembling this crew.
But, as Bruce Wayne will attest...
...you have to spend money to make money.
STAY DOWN ON THE FLOOR AND COVER YOUR EARS.
WHAROOOM
4


I made a promise on the grave of my parents to rid this city of the evil that took their lives. By day, I am Bruce Wayne, billionaire philanthropist. At night, criminals, a cowardly and superstitious lot, call me...
BATMAN
CREATED BY BOB KANE
HUSH
Chapter One
THE RANSOM
I'M GOING TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE.
Jeph LOEB writes
Jim LEE pencils
Scott WILLIAMS inks
Richard STARKINGS letters
Alex SINCLAIR colors
Bob SCHRECK edits
Morgan DONTANVILLE assistant edits
special thanks to Mark CHIARELLO

Y-YOU'RE... BATMAN...?
YES.

Thirty-seven seconds left.

The boy is trembling. Not that much older than I was when...
He's probably just as terrified of me as he is of what's happening.
PHOOM


It makes me think about Clark and how he'd handle the situation.
Not just the bending steel and flying out.

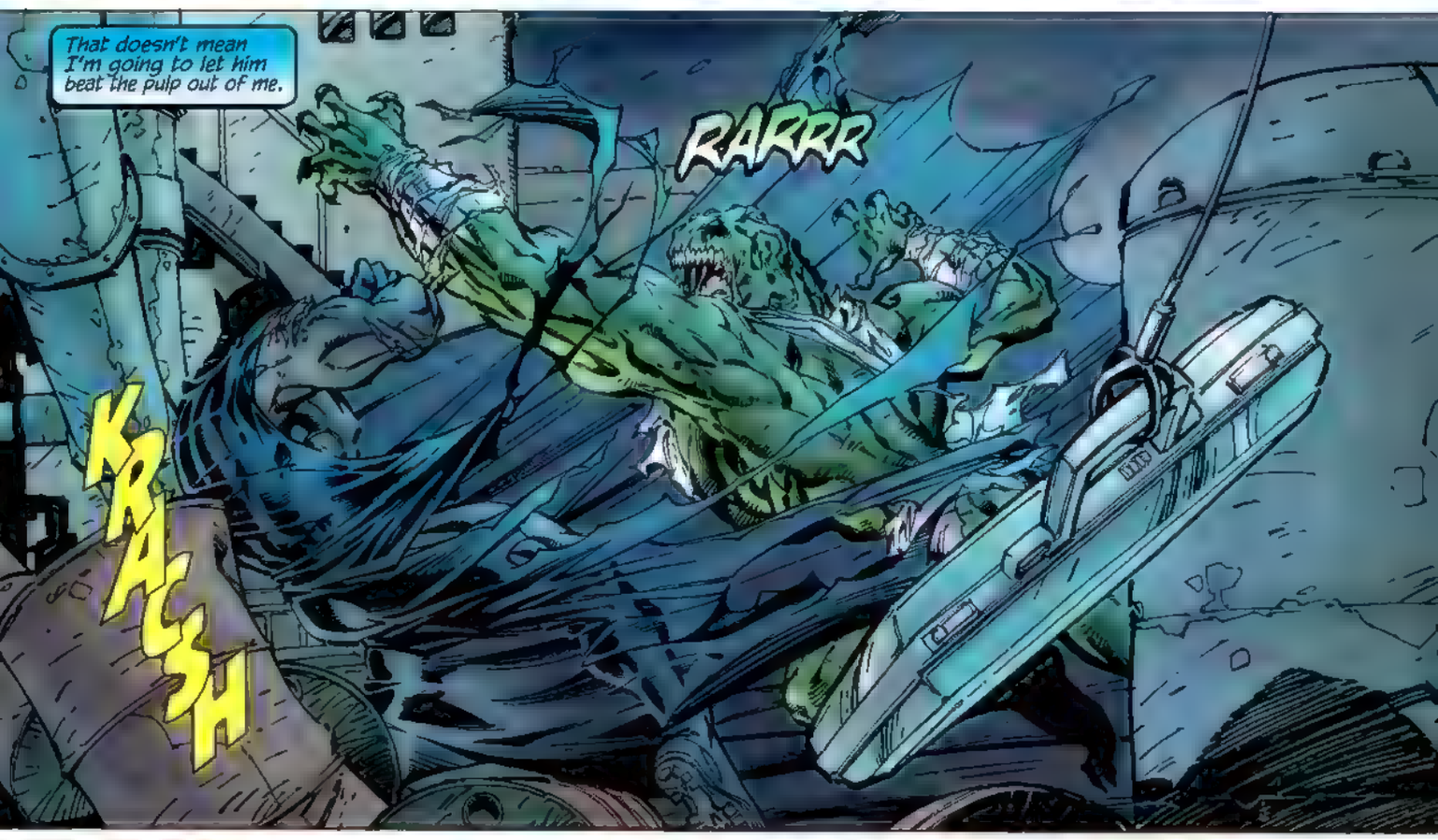
Clark could smile. That Boy Scout thing. And then say something homespun to put the boy at ease.
But, the boy doesn't have Clark. He has me.
In my city. Gotham City.
It is better that way.
L-LOOK OUT --

None of this was the boy's fault. He didn't ask to be born Edward Lamont IV, heir to the Lamont chemical fortune.
Lamont Chemical being the LexCorp acquisition that created RC-60, a defoliate that makes napalm look like lipstick.
Edward was walking home from school two days ago when a large man in a raincoat snatched him off the streets and vanished.
The large man was KILLER CROC.
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE. THIS DOESN'T INVOLVE YOU.
SLASHH
The vanishing act involved the Gotham City sewer system.
Within six hours, a demand for ten million dollars was made. The Lamont family, the Mayor, The G.C.P.D. and even the F.B.I. all wanted to pay the ransom to get the boy back.
Everyone but me.

While Croc sent them all on a wild-goose chase, he picked up the money and I went after the hostage.
I NEED THAT MONEY.
WAM
I thought I had two minutes before Croc would get back and find the boy was missing.
BRAK
I was off by eleven seconds.
I'M GONNA EAT YOU ALIVE!
DUSCHK

This was planned. Timed. Well executed. The real question is "Why?"
SLAK
BDOK
Kidnapping was never Croc's M.O.
Too many variables. Too many things that could go wrong.
Bottom line. He's not that smart.
Someone else had a hand in all this.
WTOK
SLKSRC

YOUR BONES WILL SNAP.
YOUR BLOOD WILL FILL MY BELLY.
More than just his M.O. has changed. His body -- maybe his mind -- has mutated. As if... he were more savage than human.


That doesn't mean I'm going to let him beat the pulp out of me.
RARRR
KRACSH

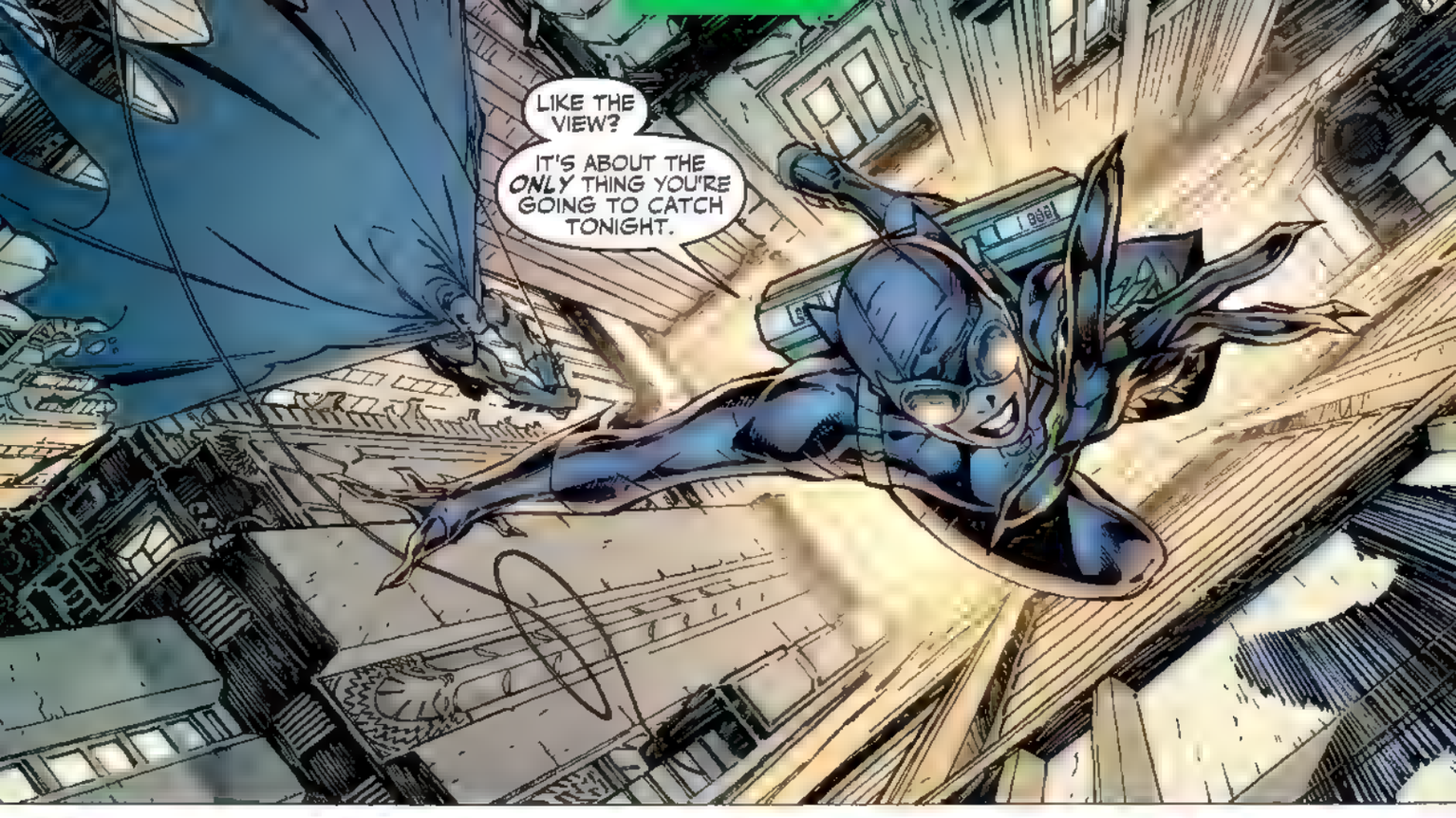
What Croc has in strength and speed, he lacks in other areas.
And a vulnerability to hypersonics.
FAP

YARRRRCXH!
SLAM
Ten thousand bumblebees at one thousand decibels.
CHNK
CHNK
CHNK
He was willing to kill me -- and the boy, for certain --
SPRAK
-- What did he need the money for?

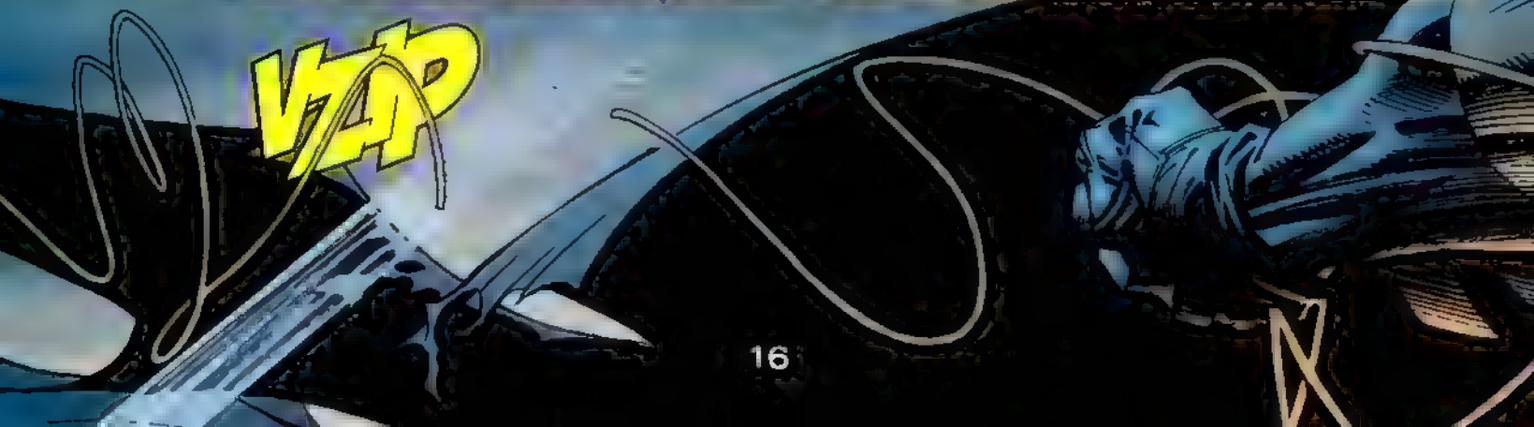
YEAH!
EDWARD.
BE QUIET.
I never was a Boy Scout.
WHUP WHUP WHUP W
F.B.I. STAY WHERE YOU ARE!
NOT HOW WE WOULD'VE HANDLED IT --
THIS IS MY CITY.
EASY, SON, WE'RE GOING TO TAKE YOU HOME NOW.
...BUT...I WANT TO STAY WITH BATMAN...
-- LET ME FINISH. BUT YOU GOT RESULTS. THE BOY IS SAFE AND THE MONEY --
-- WHERE THE HELL IS THE MONEY?

Activating heat sensor.
DURING THE FIGHT... SOMEONE ELSE TOOK IT.
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. NO ONE COULD'VE GOTTEN THROUGH OUR PERIMETER.
I DID.
PHOOM
WHERE'S HE GOING NOW?
AND SHE COULD HAVE EASILY...
SHE...?!

CATWOMAN!
WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?
This, too, is... unexpected.
YOU'RE BACK IN GOTHAM CITY.
AND YOU'RE...
...AS OBSERVANT...
...AS EVER.
Jewels. Museum pieces. Private homes. But ripping off someone else's take — just isn't her style.


LIKE THE VIEW?
IT'S ABOUT THE ONLY THING YOU'RE GOING TO CATCH TONIGHT.

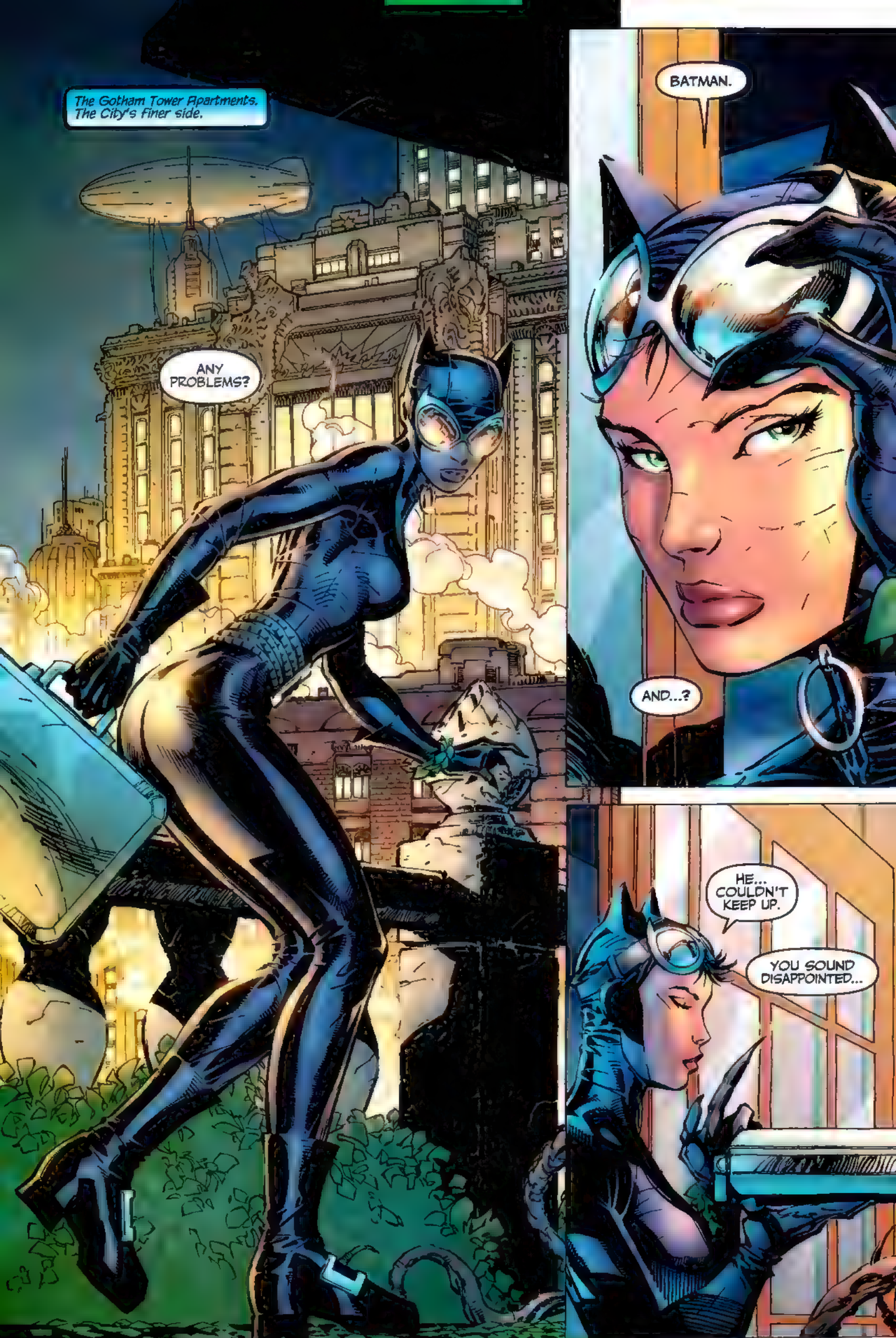
DON'T BE SO SURE.
Of late, she had been trying to make a go of it on the right side of the law.
For her to come out here -- on my ground -- there is something wrong about all of this.

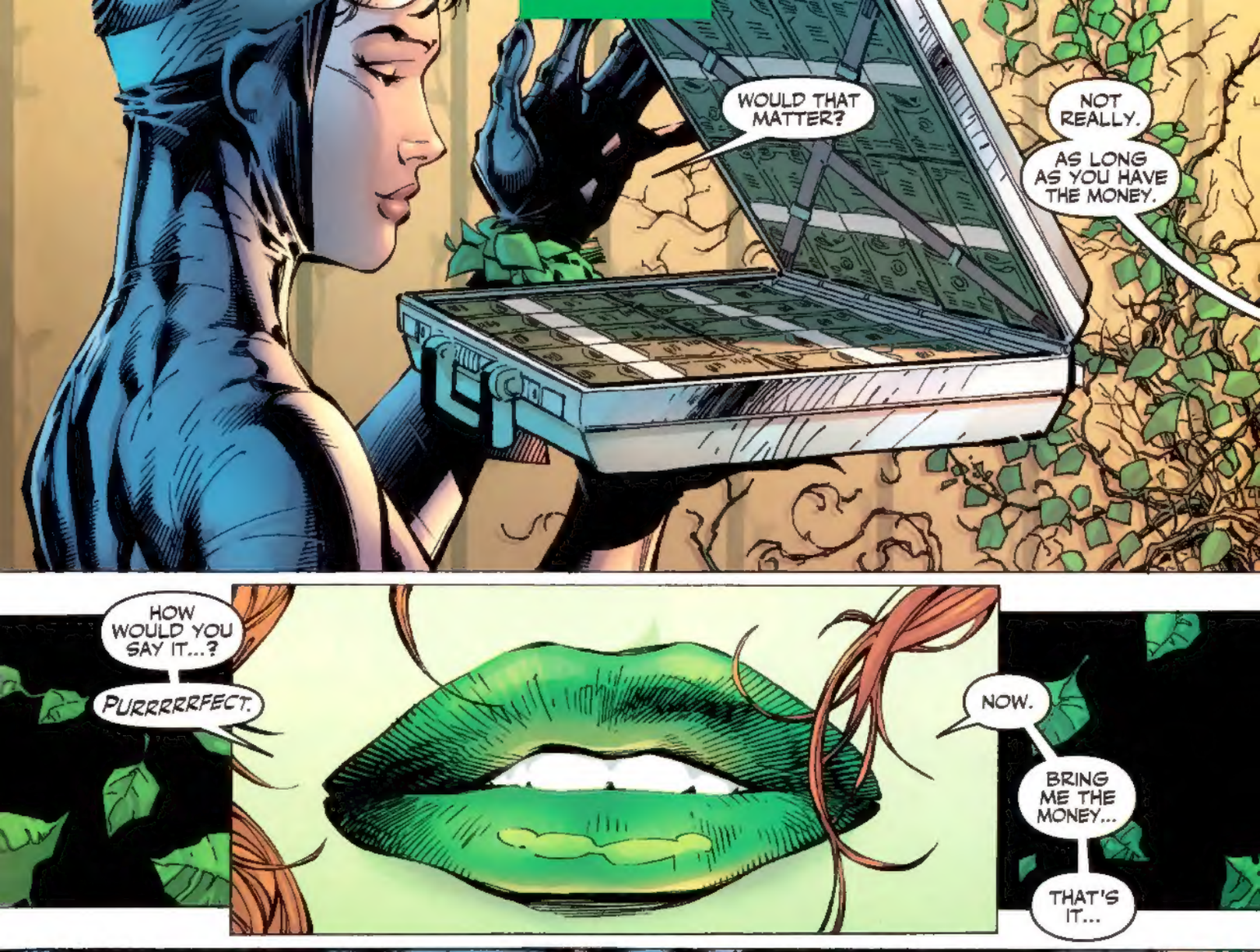

VAP

The batrope. Something. Someone. Cut the line.
YOU WERE SAYING...?
BATMAN...?

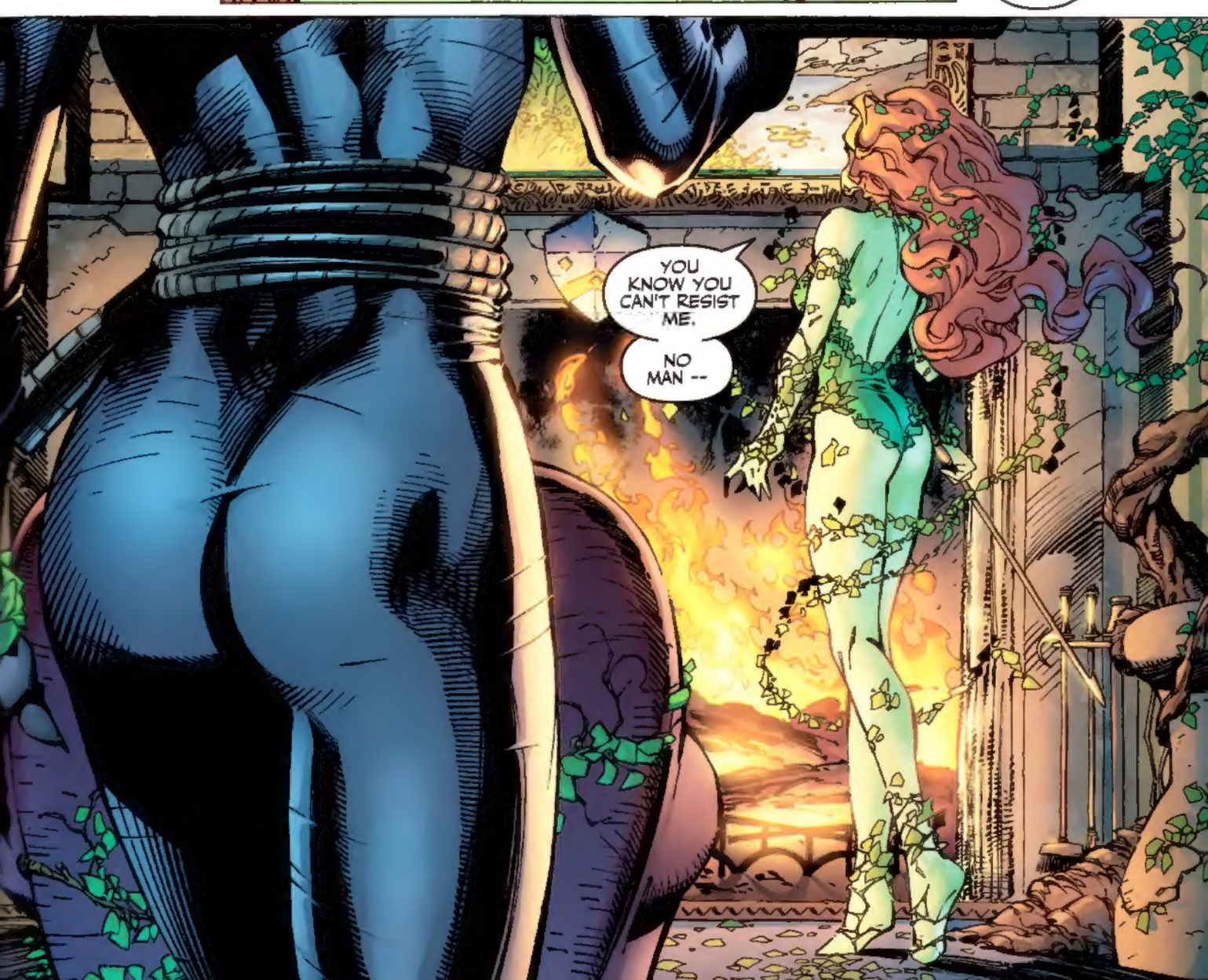
One chance.
My shoulder breaks.
First, my body betrays me.
WHOOPH
ARGHK!
DRRRRBBBL
Then, my city follows suit.

We have both grown too old together...
KRASH
PARK ROW
WELL.
WELL.
WELL.
LOOK WHAT FELL INTO HELL.


The Gotham Tower Apartments. The City's finer side.
ANY PROBLEMS?
BATMAN.
AND...?
HE... COULDN'T KEEP UP.
YOU SOUND DISAPPOINTED...


WOULD THAT MATTER?
NOT REALLY.
AS LONG AS YOU HAVE THE MONEY.

HOW WOULD YOU SAY IT...?
PURRRRRFECT.
NOW.
BRING ME THE MONEY...
THAT'S IT...


YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T RESIST ME.
NO MAN --

-- OR WOMAN CAN.
To Be Continued

DC IN DEMAND 10.02

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Next Month in...
Batman #609

Things get worse as the fuel is fired by a long lost ally.

I'M TORN BETWEEN FLIGHT AND X-RAY VISION.
— Scott McDaniel
THE POWER TO BE IN TWO PLACES AT ONCE.
— Dan DiDio
IF YOU HAD A DEVICE THAT GAVE YOU SUPER POWERS, WHAT WOULD THEY BE?
THE ABILITY TO CHANGE A PERSON'S MIND ONCE THEY'VE DECIDED ON A COURSE OF ACTION.
— Micah Wright

H-E-R-O #1

(Jan. 2003) There's a hero in all of us...according to this new series by Will Pfeifer and Kano. In each story, an ordinary person finds a device that grants them super powers. Each of these "temps" must learn that heroes are defined not merely by cool powers and costumes (though they get those too!), but also by the choices they make.

The Hot List THIS MONTH

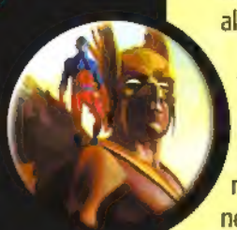
BATMAN #608

New creative team! Superstar Jim Lee joins as regular penciller to scribe Jeph Loeb (BATMAN: DARK VICTORY) with the 12-part storyline "Hush."

DOOM PATROL #13

Guest artist Seth Fisher (THE FLASH: TIME FLIES) renders a tale in which Robotman makes a discovery that turns the modern day DP into...the originals?!

HAWKMAN #8



Will solving the mystery of her parents' murder make Hawkgirl the killer's next victim? Plus, Hawkman gets a visit from The Atom.

SUPERGIRL #75

New artists Ed Benes & Alex Lei herald the return of Kara Zor-El! This is for real – not a hoax, dream, or alternate reality. So...who will be Supergirl?

WHAT'S THIS, YOU SAY?

It's not a story page, it's not an ad, it's not a letters column, it's...something **different.**

DC IN DEMAND is your source for the inside scoop on all the outrageous projects we've got going on in the **DC Universe,** comics' best place to be.

Besides the much-beloved **NEXT ISSUE** blurb up there on the left, we're offering you our **HOT LIST,** highlighting some of the most exciting events taking place in the DCU during this month. (You can't say we didn't warn you if you miss out on things everybody's going to be talking about!)

TO GET MORE OF THE INSIDE SCOOP, GO TO dccomics.com/dcindemand

Up top is the **BIG PICTURE,** as we call it. Here we focus on a **major** event coming up in 2 to 3 months. If it's up there, make sure you reserve your copy at your store or service today. We're letting you know far enough in advance that you can't be told it's already sold-out. Who **loves** ya, huh?

This section here is the **INSIDE SCOOP** where we're going to break the hot news, scooping even the snoopiest of Web sites. And why not...it's **our** news! Hot new talent we're jammin' with, exciting new projects we've cooked up, everything we know –we'll tell you!

And speaking of news and Web sites, be sure to check out the finest site for news, information, sneak peeks, and even full issues to read for free: **dccomics.com!** If you haven't been to our site recently, you're going to love the changes we've made, all to help make **you** more a part of the fantastic stuff going on in the DC Universe...and **VERTIGO** and **WILDSTORM** and everything else from DC Comics! Check it out **today** for the latest news you won't find **anywhere** else.

I mean, I'm not supposed to talk, **but**...didja know Moorcock and Simonson have **big** plans for exposing the early years of Moorcock's classic fantasy character **Elric?** Or that Dr. Fate from the ultra-hot JSA is getting his own mini? Or that the JSA will heat up further in another series with contributions by Harlan Ellison, Kevin J. Anderson, Michael Chabon, and other big names? And I **really** can't tell you about the incredible MTV writer taking over **HARLEY QUINN,** can I?

I'd better shut up now! It's more than my job's worth! More here next month...and every **day** on our Web site!

– your MOLE at 1700

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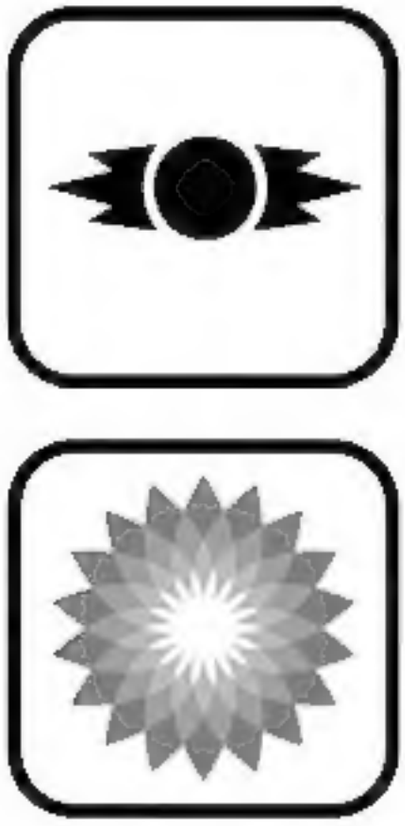

Special thanks to ScanDog for the variant cover!